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# Jesus, The Preacher

## Some Notes in Observation

by

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SOME NOTES ON THE PREACH-  
ING OF JESUS  
IN THE SYNAGOGUE OF NAZA-  
RETH.

Luke 4:14-22.

For us the significant feature of this incident is the statement of Jesus, that in His baptism of the Spirit at the fords of Jordan, He had been "anointed to preach the Gospel." "In the old legend, the horn that hung by the castle gate none could blow except the heir of the noble pile. One stranger after another would come and put the horn to his lips, but fail to sound the blast. Then the heir appeared, took it down from the gate, blew it, and there came the blast that rang down the valley and wound around the hills." At last He had come who could sound the trumpet

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

of the world's redemption; "the Heir of all the ages."

It is a reflection to awe while it inspires us, that in the calling to which our lives are devoted, we are fellow-shipped with the Son of God. "Unto me, who am the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ." Humble him to the very dust as the sense of his insufficiency does, St. Paul dares to whisper his own name alongside of his Master's.

How well it is for us that He whom we revere and love beyond all others as our personal Saviour, is the transcendant example of effective skill in the work to which our lives are devoted. We perforce imitate if we love. He who "knows the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" can scarcely fail to be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." Human standards excel as they rapidly educate to the point at which they are superseded. Another type of preaching is

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

required today than that which gave the pulpit its charm and power fifty years ago. Yet another may be called for within a generation. But this model cannot be worked out and left behind. The only hope of continued adaptation, of perennial freshness, of constant development in the young preacher, is to pattern after Christ. He alone is not a local standard, the type of any time. He sets before the runner a flying goal. What a difference between Chrysostom, "the golden mouthed," and Dwight L. Moody. Yet both were imitators of Jesus: the one like Him when "at the last great day of the feast He stood and cried, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink;" the other like Him when He spake unto them in parables saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal." There is value in homiletics. It is serviceable to be familiar with the best examples of sermonic literature. But Jesus must be the one model of

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

His spokesmen; the living pattern they may always approach, but like the horizon, may never reach.

Our attention will be arrested by the fact that Jesus was a Scriptural preacher. "There was handed Him the book of the prophet Isaiah, and when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written—" In this instance He did what has become a universal usage, based His discourse on a fragment of Holy Writ. He "took a text." With Him the text was not a pretext. It was not meant to serve the purpose of a leaded headline. The text was the compend of the sermon; the sermon was the text unfolded, as the plant is the unfolded seed. That it may be thrust upon men's attention that our mission is to report what God has spoken; that we may be conscious that behind what we say is the sanction and authority of inspiration; that we may appeal to the conscience as well as to the minds of those who hear, wise is the legitimate use of the

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

text. I cannot but mark how reverently the Saviour handles the sacred roll; how familiar He is with it; how He makes it fill the whole foreground of the worship. Its reading should never be with us a mere preliminary. Selected beforehand for its specific message, perused in studious thoughtfulness in advance, it is to be so read that people will listen and understand. It is God's message to men, as new as if the ink were still wet upon the page. So read it as to impress that! It needs no mouthing, no elocution, rarely ever any comment, but only to feel in our souls, "these are the oracles of God," and be intent it shall be listened to and understood as such. Your sermon is the word of man; the Scripture is the voice of God!

Our Lord constantly used the Scriptures for the divine sanction and proof of His statements, as the lawyer, in pleading, cites the statutes of the code and decisions of the higher courts. In so doing the preacher is placed on a



## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

vantage ground no lecturer, or philosopher, or teacher can occupy. In so far as what we say is in consonance with "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," we speak as with a voice from heaven. It is not enough that what we say shall make the impression, "This is beautiful," "This is reasonable," "This is of vital interest," "This has the consent of the wise," if we are to speak "as having authority and not as the Scribes." "Bring hither the ephod," said the High Priest when any perplexity was to be solved or any grave venture to be made. This Bible is the ephod! It settles all disputes. It is the court of last resort! We may venture no assertion, advance no thought, make no appeal, unless it abides the test of this touchstone. It must not be wrested to suit our purpose. We may not by critical arts and fetches bring over its words to the meaning we design. It may not always be necessary to quote it; it is necessary that in its preparation our teaching

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

shall be fortified by the word of God! With all their irreverence, all their impiety, men do still believe this is a revelation from heaven; superstitiously, it may be, yet they revere it, fear it, and even so may be led to believe what it confirms. And if they do not believe it, we ought to believe it, and feel that no statement is true, or if true, worth making, unless it has the seal and imprimatur of this Word; and if it has that, it can not return void. With what splendid and overwhelming audacity Spurgeon said to the ten thousand people gathered in Agricultural Hall: "As far as I am personally concerned, it is a very small consideration whether you like my doctrine or not. For your own sake I am anxious above measure that you should believe the truth as it is in Jesus. But while you live in sin your dislike of a doctrine will very probably make me feel the more sure of its truth and lead me to preach it with more vehemence. Think you that we are to learn God's truth from

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

the likings or dislikings of those who refuse to worship Him, and want an excuse for their sins? Oh unconverted men and women, it is very long before we shall come to you to learn what you would have us preach, and when we fall so low as that you, yourselves, will despise us." The great Baptist spoke with that Christlike boldness because he believed his doctrine was grounded in the Word of God!

Another thing. If you can show that whatever is discovered to be certainly true in the research and experience of today is verified in this old book, you bring its authority up to date. You exercise something of the office of the original revelators. "This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears," said Jesus. "Do you say, It is fifteen hundred years old, it is beginning to be antiquated? The fact is, it is as much a record of the day as the morning's paper or the newest book on the shelf." It is our province to show that the world has not thought

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

ahead of the Book. Let it be seen that the knowledge to which humanity has crawled for a thousand years came to holy men of old; that the recent discovery of the laws of nature is presupposed in the words of the grey fathers of the past; that even the psychologist gazing out from the threshold of his new science, must say, "This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears," and you have given proof that the book is not the invention of man, but the revelation of God, and a peremptory reason they shall accept its testimony concerning Christ. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." Be sumptuously furnished with it! Have its opulent resources at your ready command! Be stained through and through with it, as is the insect with the leaf on which it feeds! Let its bolts and nails make rigid and strong the fabric of your sermon. On your finished manuscript be able to write, "Thus saith the Lord!"

Our Lord was often an expositor of

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

the Scriptures. "And beginning from Moses and the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures." It is a thing to wonder at and regret that America does not seem able to produce such expository preachers as the great Englishmen, Parker, Meyer, Morgan and Jowett. What a field is open here for the young men of today who will school themselves in the method of the Master. An instance of His elaboration of the sacred text occurs in the Sermon on the Mount. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, but I say unto you, that any one who is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment." And so He goes through the commandments. This is not definition. That was the scribe's business; with the dictionary of the linguist and the commentary of the theologian, weighing words, and citing established meanings. Jesus drew out of the primitive statement, the old Scripture, its answer to

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

the need of the current hour. He showed the everlasting principle, the application of which in the past, however true and sufficient then, had become wholly untrue and utterly inadequate in a different time and under changed conditions. "Ye do err, not understanding the Scriptures," He said to the Sadducees. They thought it had one meaning; could have but one as the word of the unchangeable God; fixed and rigid for all ages. It was their business to define it and maintain it as the fathers had held it, and men and women were to be regulated and judged by what a past generation had understood the Bible to mean. To Jesus the Scripture was not a stereotype, but a living root. It was "the seed of the World." It was like the tent of the Arabian story, now so small it could be shut up in a walnut shell, and yet on occasion large enough to cover the king and his court and even to spread its shade over an army of men. As its expositor, He brought out the

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

meanings which the purblind sectary, the narrow bigot, the mere scholar, and the selfish soul never saw: the spirit beneath the letter; its meanings for the race; the meanings that answered to the grief, the struggle, the sin about Him, and that He carried on His breaking heart; the meanings which made it "glad tidings of great joy." "That preacher has come near perfection who can make the springs hidden amid the everlasting hills pour their waters into the valley beneath to make green its meadows and to drive the peasant's humble wheel." Only be sure the exposition does illumine, not cloud and overlay. Ian Maclaren tells us of a good old woman who was presented with a commentary on the Gospels. Asked whether she was helped to understand, "Well," she said "the large print above (which was the Gospel text) I can easily follow, but the small print below (which was the illumination by the commentator) fairly drives me stupid!"

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

The source of our Lord's instruction as a preacher was the written Word. He had no other seminary. It was all His library. Once when a lad He went among the doctors in the temple "both hearing them and asking them questions." The incident is of value as indicating that He was under limitations like ours, in that He needed to inquire to know, to be taught, to be educated to "go about His Father's business." It was not His piety to believe He need only open His mouth and the Lord would fill it. He did not need to be taught the way to God, but He did need to find out our difficult and imperfect way of finding Him. He would "know all about our struggles." He went to the temple to find out the dim, arduous way which is the best earthly doctors can show us. Paul was taught at the feet of Gamaliel; but in his maturity, he discarded what he had learned for "the truth as it is in Jesus," who never had a human teacher. "Whence hath this man this



## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

wisdom? Is not His mother Mary, and His brothers James and Joses and Simeon?" The answer to the question is one to cheer us, who feel keenly the discrepancy between what we are in the deficiency of our education, or in the meagerness of our resources however educated, and the great office we have to discharge. From a child He had known the Scriptures! If we can read the word of God we have all the advantage for education for our work enjoyed by the Son of Man. And if, in addition to it, we have, as we surely do have, all the wealth of modern knowledge at our command, where is there any excuse for incompetence and impotence in ministers of Christ?

The preaching of Jesus was novel, often startling! "No man ever spake like this man," they said. His ways of presenting truth were without precedent! His teachings upset the settled, conventional ideas of His time. He exposed himself to the charge of dangerous innovations, subverting

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

heresies. He thus swayed the power there is in surprise to waken jaded interest. But He never stepped a hair's breadth outside the written Word. When in after years the apostles wrote down the sayings of Jesus, which when He spoke them they could not understand, they were so new, so revolutionary, one thing impressed them, "He spake thus that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." Even of the parables, the most characteristic of His ways of teaching, they say "He spoke unto them in parables that the Scripture spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled." The Scripture was this great Preacher's brief. There is no excursion of speculative thought beyond, "Thus it is written." He was unique but not original; "as the Father hath taught me so I speak!" Let us be admonished. We are "stewards of the mysteries of God;" not vintners but only butlers, bearing to unknown guests, on their way to an unknown world, the unknown wine of the grapes of God:

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

“stewards of the mysteries of God.” In our Lord’s example we are permitted the widest latitude as to methods of expression, as to the field of instruction, with this limitation: we may not go beyond the tether of this book; “neither to add to or take from” the Word of God. We have no extra-Scriptural revelation. We report, we do not originate. We are not authors, but publishers. Need any of us be restive under this restraint, as if it did not allow sufficient range for our powers, as if this sky were too small for our wing? The message, thus restricted, has great conceptions of the Divine Being; luminous revelations concerning human nature; a Gospel vast and massive, contemplating the redemption of the race from the guilt, power and torment of sin. It overpasses earth, time, death, tomb, and stretches into heaven! Do you chafe against this narrow cell? Do you want to shake off old traditions and be a “liberal” preacher? Where Paul cried “Who is sufficient

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

for these things?" Where Chrysostom, Luther, Bossuet, Luther, Wesley, Snethen, Stockton, Bushnell, Beecher, Brooks, Cuyler, Hale found verge and room, who of us is to say he is "cribbed cabined and confined?" If there was room enough for the Son of God within "the volume of the Book," there is room enough for you and me.

Let it be noted that Jesus never raised a question as to the errancy of the Word. In His day it was regarded with a scrupulous, if not idolatrous veneration. The very jots, the accent marks, were holy, and He said "Not a jot or tittle shall pass away; all shall be fulfilled." If all the questions raised as to the authorship of the canonical books; the credibility of many parts of them; the morality of other portions; the scientific and chronological accuracy of them, are well founded, Jesus was not aware of these defects, or, if He was, they did not disturb His conviction that they were the Word of God. With infinite propriety He

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

could have weeded out the human accretions that had crept into the sacred page; but He never takes the role of a critic. Strange enough the very incidents which most of all have been the butts of ribaldry He puts in the limelight! I will not be wiser than Jesus Christ. I do not believe our modern illuminists can make me wiser than He. I prefer to be a fool with Him rather than be wise with the Chicago University et al. "How is it you have no doctors of divinity?" some one asked that shrewd old Methodist preacher, Jacob Gruber. "Our divinity is not sick and needs no doctors," was the quick reply. The Word of God moving through the ages with the might of conquest and crowding glory with redeemed sinners, has no such infirmities as call for this new school of surgery. Your business and mine is to believe the Word, not question it; to obey it, not to mend it; to preach it, not to be its critics! That it is mingled with earthly elements, has

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

features on which human infirmity is stamped, who can be foolish enough to deny? But who shall say it ought not to be so? The man's hand is seen beneath the seraph's wing! The Living Word "was made flesh," and was perfected as a Saviour in that He "bore our infirmities." There cannot be wheat without chaff. Bread is all the more wholesome and nutritious if all the bran is not bolted from the flour. Truth without admixture of sand and grit cannot probably be digested by the human gizzard. So far as all new and strange ideas are concerned,—ideas which assault the opinion of the Christian ages; which were not required for the experience of the saintliest souls that ever walked with God; which the martyrs did not need who counted not their lives dear unto themselves; which the church has never wanted to bring millions of sinners to salvation and send millions of saints triumphant to the skies,—as for all such advanced ideas, it may be your privilege to

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

preach them. But if you would verify your claim to have sense and piety enough to do so, take the old advice of Horace, "Nonumque prematur in annum," which being freely interpreted means that nobody will be any worse for it if you keep them to yourself for nine years! By that time you will be chasing after some other jack o' lantern of philosophy and vain deceit! "These are they which testify of Me," said Jesus of the Scriptures; if that be so, then whatever their glory or their lack in any other view, they do not need to be mended or improved to be a message of salvation to the dying world!

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

Mathew V.

The temperament of the speaker, the tone of the discourse, how largely these affect results! In the Sermon on the Mount, in which "the Bible comes to flower," the characteristic temper of Christ's preaching is perhaps best illustrated. Its characteristic temper, I say, for it had many moods. It was as variable as His style, as His method. Like the face, the landscape, the sea, it ever changed and ever remained the same!

It will be noted that neither in this, or any other discourse, was Jesus ever the orator. We miss the eloquence in which the pulpit has often excelled; after which it too often strains. I cannot recall a text-book that cites His words in illustration of the rhetorician's art.



## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

Strangely enough His language wants the tropical color, "the barbaric pearls and gold" of Oriental speech. He had come to speak the Word for which the world had listened for ages, and that it had not heard from the lips of raptured prophets and "He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." How plain and tame such a sentence looks beside the glowing periods of Isaiah, of Chrysostom, of Massilon, of Whitefield! Listen to this quotation from the introduction of a sermon of one of the most eloquent preachers of any time: "I hold the universe in contemplation! I see the throne! God is on it! A heaven full of cherubim and seraphim shine and sing around it! Beyond heaven, innumerable and magnificent systems of suns, planets, comets and satellites map off the darkness with golden lines of silent glory, and fill the vacuum with the pulse, the thought, the action of life everlasting!" Place in contrast

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

with this, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." How grey and commonplace it seems; and yet after two thousand years of thought, we are not quite sure we know all it means. What is it to be poor in spirit? What is the kingdom of heaven? The one is the rocket in the air; the other a star in the sky. The one is the fresco painter's picture; the other the miniature of the master-artist. The one is a gorgeous orchid; the other the brown seed in which sleep the waving forests of a thousand years!

There is another mood which never appears in the preaching of our Lord. He is never amusing! In all His bright ministry there is not a trace of humor. It is frequently brought into the modern pulpit, and seems sometimes so effective in arresting the attention and good-will of promiscuous assemblies, and even in illuminating the truth, one hesitates to censure it. People may be affected by ridicule whose consciences

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

are proof against appeal, and wit may be a more powerful weapon in dealing with folly, indifference and sin than argument. But humor needs to be chastened with great sense, piety and taste. "The foolish talking and jesting" the Word of God condemns everywhere is too often heard in the sacred desk. "Apes and peacocks" were among the curious things Hiram contributed to the building of Solomon's temple. Some of them got away! One can conceive that the serious purpose of the Master may prompt the guarded or involuntary humor of some preachers, but one cannot imagine that any man who lives on the confines of eternity as we ought to live; or any man who is moved by the highest intentions of an ambassador for Christ; or any man who understands the true approaches to men's religious nature, can deliberately make an Artemus Ward of himself; don the motley and shake the bauble of the clown, indulge in the grotesque and droll, only to

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

amuse. Rowland Hill, Henry Ward Beecher, Sam Jones may be pardoned, but their imitators never. It is better, however, to be an ape than a peacock; the ape is never quite so funny. Better the man who makes you laugh with him in his cheery earnestness, than the one who makes you laugh at him in his pompous dignity, his theatrical solemnity, the ludicrous gravity of a cold heart and an empty head! Many things are more irreverent; still humor is a poor thing in the pulpit. There can be no need of it to attract if the cross is lifted up. It had no place in the preaching of Jesus and the apostles!

The temper of Christ's preaching, however, was never gloomy. We wonder how the Man of Sorrows could have so little of the tone of sadness. He was grave, serious, earnest. A few times He spoke with the pathos of out-breaking tears, but as often "He rejoiced in spirit!" He was here as always a paradox. He was serious be-

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

cause He looked the tragedy of life in the face. He would not skim over the stern facts of existence that "lie too deep for tears." Sin, sorrow, death, judgment, hell; here they are! They sober Him, sadden Him, organize His life into a battle to be accomplished; make Him sweat blood in agonies of prayer! How is it then He is never morbid; sees the bloom of the lily and the red in the sunset sky; gives Himself the pleasure of friendship; commands a peace so great He has it to impart to us; can say, "My joy shall be in you, and your joy shall be full"? How were the sorrow in His heart, and the ground-tone of His preaching, "Blessed, blessed, blessed" reconciled? The answer is that if He saw the tragic elements of Life, He knew He held the power to redeem mankind and dry forever the fountain of its tears. He recognized the dreadful side of life, not as a cynic to gibe and mock; not as a pessimist to despair; not as the poet and novelist to

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

play on men's emotions, but as one, who through His perfect sympathy divined the secret of our woe, and was conscious that He had for it the sovereign cure. Brother preacher, you need no trick of manner, no rhetorical art to captivate men. You do not have to carry a balancing pole and be careful you are not too serious, not too light-hearted. Only get out of yourself by getting into the life about you; carry the sin, the sorrow, the eternity of your people on your heart, then you will not be trivial. Know because you are the happy subject of it, that you bear on your lips tidings of a perfect cure for all the woes of life, and all the terror of eternity, and you will not be gloomy. You will be sober with a seriousness full of sunshine and hope; you will be grave, but with a sweetness and joy in that gravity which men will love and trust!

Note is to be taken, from the Sermon on the Mount, of the Master-preacher's method. In the preceding chapter we

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

are told that "Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching and preaching the good tidings of the Kingdom." And here we read, "When the disciples came to Him, He taught them, saying——" He was a preacher in our sense of the word, discoursing to the assembled multitude, as when He spoke the parables from the boat moored at the lake-side, as when on the last great day of the feast He stood among the thronging populace in the temple court and cried, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." But far more frequently He was the teacher. It was to single persons He addressed the greatest of all His discourses: to the woman at the well, to Nicodemus on the house top, in the whispering night-wind and beside the flaring torch, or to the group of disciples, as here on the Mount, and in the post-communion addresses on "the same night in which He was betrayed." By the way, you will reflect that the quarries from which we mine our doctrinal

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

statements of Christian truth, were not sermons or orations but personal letters. The Master and the apostles recognized the limitations of popular discourse as we do not. All true preaching must teach, of course. It should instruct, otherwise it is rant. You cannot awaken the conscience or move the feelings if you do not command the respect of the intelligence. "By the manifestations of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience." Still the specific effect of preaching is inspiration. It appeals to the will, to the emotions, to the sentiments, which prompt men to put in practice the truth they have already learned, and which more readily prompt them when they are massed together than when they are alone. Teaching is to be regarded as a function of the preacher distinct and apart from preaching. The sermon may not touch the questions arising in the individual mind. It may be unintelligible to some. It is easy to evade personal



## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

application when appeal is general. After Jesus had preached about the sower, He went over the whole ground in explanation to the disciples. At the dinner in Bethany, Mary forgot to serve, so eagerly was she listening to the table-talk in which Jesus instructed the guests. The fact that His reported discourses often have matter in them foreign to their theme, giving color to the inference that the evangelists gather up His sayings and jumble them together without reference to the order of time and place, is explained by the interruptions of his hearers with questions often irrelevant. He answers them, to take up again the broken thread of His subject, or to return to it no more, as if the original hearer had gone away with the shifting crowd. Some of His sublimest utterances are personal retorts. A tempting lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor? and He, answering, said——," and there follows the parable of the Good Samaritan. Many men can preach; few are

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

instructive in the casual conversation, when the group comes together, at the firesides they visit. Remark how awkward the most fluent of us is in an attempt to make religion the subject of conversation with his own son. Who is so full of the sacred matter, that without obtrusion, so that the auditor is enlisted and pleased, he touches with the light and hope of another world, the topics and affairs of today that weigh on men's concern? Be eager for that kind of knowledge. Get the art in which Jesus so excelled. "Be apt to teach." Be the messenger of Christ in the private colloquy; in the daily opportunities your association with men gives you. We would all be better preachers in the pulpit, if we were fitted and practiced as teachers outside of it!

We are led to think of the place Jesus gives to doctrine in His preaching. In print and pulpit we hear now-a-days much in depreciation of doctrine; dogma it is called; Christian

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

truths pronounced with the tone of authority, of unqualified conviction. If the doctrines are taught at all, we are advised, let it be with the modest accent of men not so cock-sure of what they are saying. "Back to Christ," "Back to the Sermon on the Mount," is the slogan of this cult. Certainly this Sermon is dogmatic; positive, definite, final. It assumes to be the last word on the subject. "He spake with authority and not as the scribes." These sentences are not mere literature with a religious accent. They do not diffidently venture an opinion subject to correction. They are not pleading for the verdict of the jury. "It hath been said by them of old time," said by Moses, by the prophets. thus and thus, "but I," the most venerable precedents, the latest scholarship to the contrary notwithstanding, "I say unto you—" This is dogmatic, and the conversion of the world is waiting for that tone to come into the preaching of the Christian pulpit today!

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

And certainly the Sermon is doctrinal! It is admitted that its doctrine is implied, not stated in our theological terms. Therein Jesus was a superior preacher to St. Paul. With Him doctrine was like the articulated bones of the body, concealed, but supporting the vital organs, and giving them their strength and movement. There does not occur in this discourse, or any other of Jesus, the term "original sin," but it could not have been preached if man had not fallen from his first estate, and it has no point or application except as a call back from the depravity of nature. There is no mention of "the atonement," or "justification by faith," or "regeneration." But let any man, that he may not perish, undertake to put in practice these sayings of Jesus, and see how soon he is reduced to despair, if he can find no provision for pardon, and no finer's fire to purge out his disability to meet the commandments. "Righteousness" is the demand of his sermon; but where is it to

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

be had except "by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?" Behind your preaching, there must be knowledge, clear in perception and strong in conviction, of the great doctrinal truths implied in Christ's teaching and developed by His inspired apostles. A skimmed theology is not going to nourish a robust morality. You cannot drop the big themes and make great saints. If you so preach that, while your discourse is free from mechanical definitions and a worn-out terminology, every position you advance, every appeal you make, presupposes, involves, and is molded upon these doctrines then you will have caught Christ's manner, and His charm and power as a preacher of the Gospel!

The Sermon on the Mount is a magnificent note of the moral qualification of the preacher who models after the Son of Man. "Seeing the multitude He went up into the mountain, and when He had sat down, His disciples came to Him, and He taught them;"

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

not giving them the matter they were to repeat when they went out to preach; but teaching them what they must be, if they expected to discharge their mission to the multitude. Are we sent to preach the Sermon on the Mount? By no means. We are to "preach Jesus and the resurrection." We are "to know nothing among men save Christ and Him crucified." We are to call men to repentance, and faith in Jesus for the remission of sins. "'Tis all my business here below to cry, Behold the Lamb!" But we are to practice these sayings of Jesus, that we may have the character and life that will illustrate and prove the sanctifying power of the Gospel we proclaim. If you are to go to the multitude, and not go in vain, you must first retire from it; go up into the mount, and in communion with Jesus be taught to be men poor in spirit, hungry and athirst for righteousness, pure in heart, yearning for peace, ready to suffer for righteous-

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

ness' sake ; men who will be as salt and light in the world by your obedience to God's law in the spirit of it ; men who practice prayer and almsgiving that none but your Father who seeth in secret knows anything about and who have a trust in God expelling all care about the wherewithal you shall be fed and clothed ; men able to judge others justly and kindly ; men who agonize to enter the straight gate and tread the narrow way ; men who build up on the sayings of Jesus a house on the rock, in which you abide and into which with confidence you can call the storm-tossed and tempest-beaten, for a sure refuge and salvation ! Jesus translated His life and character into this sermon ; do you translate it back into your character and life. Then when you stand out and preach redemption in His name, what you are shall command attention and reverence for what you say, and give pathos, edge, unction, proof and power to your witness to the Lamb of God.

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

"I am the truth," said Jesus. And there is the basis of every ministry that is true, beneficent, divine. Tongues shall cease, knowledge shall vanish away, prophecy shall fail; character tells. Not goodness, that is negative and has no force. Not religious fervors, zealous service on occasions, but character, rectitude in the abiding quality and habit of the soul. You must believe what you would have others believe; you must be what you bid others be, or your word rings false like a pewter coin. It takes consummate acting to imitate grief, or joy, or wrath and not let the mask slip. Holiness cannot be simulated at all. It is no more imitable than fire. As genius makes life breathe in the marble and palpitate on the canvass, holiness must be so in you as to steep language, gesture and tone. Without it impotence will be on your ministry, however you stir a little dust of praise! With it your ministry may fail today; the multitude, if it ever come, may disperse;



## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

you may be crucified, but on the third day you shall rise again! Be ye holy that bear the vessels of the Lord!

A final note is to be made of the object of the preaching of Jesus. The preacher must have an aim, always in his mind and on his heart, a "spur in the lagging sides of his intent." It has been said, "The sin of a dead minister is the sin of the indefinite article." A live minister is simply one with a program. Alas, that with so many of us the true end is dim, distant, traditional background, while what ought to be mere means, sermons and services, Bible readings and prayers, studies and calls are thrust into the foreground.

Our aim must be that of Christ. We will at once say, it was His object to save men. "The Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost," the Scripture says. But it does not say He preached to save them. He died to save them. Still the statement is true, if only we do not narrow the word

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

“saved” till we falsify it. Suppose He was preaching to save sinners in this sermon, what idea do we get of salvation? Is it something all over in a moment; an incident at one point in a man’s life? Is it to repent, to confess Christ, to join a church? Is it an experience induced, an assurance of forgiveness, a change of heart? Certainly it is far more. It stretches over the whole life, from the agonizing in “the strait gate” till the last storms of death and judgment beat on the rock-founded house. It is to be saved from error accepted as the truth through custom; to be saved from bondage to the letter and from formal worship; from a righteousness that is less, or other than purity of heart, meekness, the spirit of prayer. It is to be saved from covetousness of this world’s goods, from selfishness, from ungodly anxieties about the things of time!

When I observe in how few instances Jesus preached to save men in the sense of the evangelist, of the re-

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

vival meeting; how seeing the multitude, instead of seizing the occasion for immediate conversions, He withdrew from them and went up into the mountain and taught the disciples; how the matter He is always thrusting into the foreground is "the Kingdom;" how content He is to die, saying, "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do," when the number of the souls He had led to profession of faith would not satisfy Dr. Chapman as a single night's ingathering, my conviction grows that His immediate aim was something else. It was to organize a society, whose bond of union would be love for Himself, and whose ideals of living would be His sayings and example. It was "to build up the church," as we say; not in numbers, for His fan was in His hand; He put tests to men so severe and drastic He thinned out His disciples; but to build up the church in knowledge and character, and expect the salvation of men after it had been so schooled, that its

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

prayers would be answered by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Indoctrinate, vitalize, organize into vigorous, sacrificial activity the church. We save the world by the indirection that first builds up a church which in its spirit duplicates the life of Jesus, prolongs His sacrifice on the cross, and is the depository of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. We are intent on getting many converted to build up the church; it fattens the report we take up to Conference, it gives us prestige in the community, it helps the financial status. Our motives may be nobler. But it is to reverse the divine order. It is to put the pyramid on its apex. We are to build up the church that it may save men! Bring to bear the mental suggestion, the personal influence, the social pressure, the Scriptural truth which shall quicken, strengthen and employ the divine life in believers. Arouse them to sensibility of the immoral influences, the political corruptions, the economic wrongs that op-

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

press and deprave the world. Awaken them to their responsibility in the matter of the education of the young, the evangelization of foreign lands, the subjugation of the drink curse, the establishment of peace in the earth, the union of the severed members of Christ's body. Lift your people out of their local lives; let them be stirred and irrigated by these universal interests of Christianity. How manifest it is, that by a ministry so employed, our Lord's ministry is prolonged. And it shall prove true, not only of the where-withal we shall be fed and clothed, but of that which lies nearer to our hearts, the conversion of souls, that if we "seek first the Kingdom of God all these things shall be added unto us!"

## AT THE WELL IN SYCHAR.

John 4: 5-30.

We must infer from this incident, that individual soul-seeking and soul-saving, is not an "aside," an exceptional duty waiting for a chance opportunity, the faculty for which is a rare accomplishment, but a foremost and capital method, in which every minister ought to become skillful, and in which he should be engaged as the main business of his vocation.

In every conference of evangelists and church workers, we hear emphasized today the importance of individual work for individuals. The situation is making it more and more compulsory. Revivals can no more be depended on for increase. It becomes difficult to secure attendance upon the preaching of the Word. Music, pic-

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

tures, services made popular by eliminating or concealing everything which directly appeals to the religious nature are resorted to. Reliance for church increase is shifted to the Sunday School and the young people's societies, and how little there is in these that tends to personal salvation, and how they diminish our congregations, we all know. We are being forced to personal dealing with people as a life and death necessity. This does not indicate defeat. It is a forward movement. It is advance toward Christ's method. If it is exclaimed, "No; preaching is the way to save the world," I answer, this is preaching; the highest type of it; the preaching of Jesus in His colloquy with the water-carrier, in His conversation with Nicodemus, in His teaching and praying with the disciples. The fact is the pulpit speaks as the proxy of the church. It is a provisional expedient to make up for the failure of the church in a duty for which its members are incapable, or

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

unwilling, or that it has not clearly recognized. Normal conditions are approached; such an enlightenment and consecration will be required and stimulated among the people of God, and such vast increase follow as history has never recorded, when the pulpit's mission shall be confined to the instruction and inspiration of the church, while outside the Sabbath and the church walls, ministers and laymen, on the street, in the homes, in the casual greetings and meetings of every day "shall say, every man to his neighbor, 'Know the Lord.'" Christianity and its attendant civilization entered Europe through Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened," and the probability is that no great religious movement was ever inaugurated, no vast revival ever begun, that did not start in some one soul moved by personal appeal, like this woman at Jacob's well!

You will note the Master-preacher's quick perception and use of an opportunity. It was so casual a meeting, so



## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

commonplace, so unlikely a situation, we may well wonder if there have not been always lying before our eyes, such openings for influence; and that if we had looked for them, life would be such a retrospect of wasted time and useless effort as it is to many of us who have seen our only opportunity in the pulpit. The water-carrier was of shrewd intelligence, but with a limited horizon. She had seen Jesus do no mighty work. She was not like the woman who had been released from demons, or the widow whose only son had been restored from death. There was no wonder or gratitude to open her heart to Christ. She did not come like Nicodemus, as an inquirer. Concern in her bosom there was none. Attention, interest, desire, all had to be awakened. Her lax morals indicated a dead conscience; even moral sensibility had to be created in her. We may be very curious to see how the great Teacher will do His work on a subject so difficult!

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

First of all, He shows a perfect freedom from all the social and ecclesiastical prejudices of His day. This at once piqued the curiosity and arrested the interest of the woman: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me which am a Samaritan?" That he will talk with a woman at all, and a woman of her race and faith, surprises and conciliates her. She wondered and was pleased.

It is to be noted that Jesus in explaining His attitude, does not say that to His mind the Samaritan is as near right as the Jew; that the distinction is in non-essentials not worth dispute. His was not the broad mindedness which holds that it makes no difference what people believe, if only they are sincere. He was not as advanced a preacher as some of us who minimize to the vanishing point the difference between Catholic and Protestant, Trinitarian and Unitarian, Hindoo and Christian. Jesus does not blink the truth in His charity, or to make fair

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

weather with His hearer. If He had, His influence with the shrewd woman would have been over. The liberality which is really indifference, the catholicity which is the want of positive convictions, has small weight. "Ye worship ye know not what; we worship that which we know, for salvation is of the Jews." If the question is, which temple is Jehovah's, it is that on Mt. Zion, not that on Gerizem. But, neither Jew or Samaritan must lose sight of a greater fact, that "God is a Spirit;" His temple is in the heart of him who "worships Him in spirit and truth." He is on no mountain, in no temple, if He is not first in the heart of the worshipper; and to such a worshipper He is everywhere! So Jesus teaches, and so He lifts the interview up to a ground where there can be no dispute. He secures a conversation and avoids a controversy. He leads the woman to the essential matter of the spiritual life and her personal relations to God. An eager, earnest Chris-

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

tian man was in the far West, and hired a conveyance for a long drive. It was his rule to open an opportunity, if possible, to speak for Christ with every one with whom he was thrown. The driver was an Irishman, full of talk about the region they were traversing, and it was long before a natural opening to the subject presented itself. At last the man let it out that he was a Roman Catholic. Our friend, very quietly asked him if he was a good Catholic. No controversy was raised with the man about his faith. The ground on which they would have wrangled till sundown, to no purpose, was avoided. He could not be a good Catholic and not a child of God. The man owned that he was not faithful, and was so wisely and lovingly pressed to become so, that he was moved to repentance and led to a saving knowledge of Christ. So Jesus dealt with the Samaritan woman. May the Holy Spirit make us as wise to win souls!

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

You will further note the insight of the human heart which marked the preaching of Jesus. "He knew what was in man." When Simon Peter was brought to Him, "He looked upon him," and the man's faith was taken captive. An unusual word is employed to describe that look. It must have been remarkable, since St. John remembered it in his old age. On the dreadful night of his denial, it was the same "look" that broke his heart, "and he went out and wept bitterly." And later when his affection was put in question, it was in the consciousness of the knowledge of him that look disclosed, he bared his breast and cried, "Lord, thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Similarly it was the amazed sense of Christ's knowledge of him that swept the prejudiced Nathaniel to his immediate confession. Mark how different in the two cases the treatment made possible by this knowledge. Peter is assured that his native frailty shall pass away

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

at last; the inconstant, impulsive, temptible spirit shall become resolute, steadfast. "Thou shalt be called Peter"—the man of rock! Nathaniel's guilelessness is recognized and he is won by the promise that the holiness he loved and sought under the figtree should be perfected in fuller revelations and richer experiences. "Thou shalt see greater things than these!" So with the Woman at the Well. Jesus knows all her past; He sends her mind back over all her guilty years. "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." He did not talk to her about the corruption of the human heart; He only let her know that He was aware of the corruption of her heart. He did not reproach her; tell her she would go to hell! As if it were not good for her to dwell too long on her wickedness, he led her thoughts away to God, as present everywhere; only to be approached, yet ever to be approached by the spirit that is sincere. "And she ran and said, Come see a man that told

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

me all the things that ever I did!" What Jesus knew intuitively we must find out, the lives with which we have to deal. Certainly I do not mean by prying, through gossip-mongering. Just here the most of us fall down; we do not know our man, and he knows that we do not. It is not that knowledge of "human nature," in which most of us believe ourselves to be such proficient, however deficient in other things, we need, but personal, sympathetic acquaintance with each actual, lonely life about us; the spiritual state it is in, that we may lead it to the next higher; the singularity of the disposition, the point where it is susceptible or stubborn, that we may tactfully, suggestively deal with it. Herein is the value of pastoral visiting. You are apt to do it to be popular. "The home-going preacher makes a church-going people" is your maxim. You should go to identify yourself with the life of each family and every member of it; to take to it a sympathy, a personal, heart-

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

felt interest in all that concerns it; a wisdom to counsel, a strong helpfulness that will elicit confidence, in all of their sins, and struggles, and sorrows. Then your basis is laid for instruction. Your influence is assured. I do not know but the most important book in the minister's study, the one to be con-  
ned over oftenest with prayers and tears, is the church-register!

It is interesting that Jesus opened His way to be of service to this woman by asking a service of her. He watches her in silence till the bucket comes dripping from the well and she has filled her pitcher, and then He saith to her, "Give me to drink." I do not think He intended it as an adroit move, but it was. Other women will have nothing to do with her. She must come at an hour when they are not there. But this man asks her to draw water for him, to do him a kindness. He did not put her under obligations to Himself; He put Himself under obligations to her. He who will get an influence



## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

over me is not the one who does things for me, but who teaches me to do things; who recognizes a value in me; sees a use for me. It may seem a circuitous way to win a man to the Saviour to employ him first in the Saviour's service. But in many instances it is the only possible way. In vain Moses pleads with Hobab to go with the host through the desert, by the promise that he shall share in all the good God had promised to Israel. But when he says, "You can be eyes to us; your desert-craft will serve us; we need your prowess and strength and guidance," then he went. I know the danger. It may demoralize the church, quench the Spirit, suppress devotion, to put godless people in the choir. It seems clear that unconverted men and women should not be teachers in the Sunday School or hold official places. Yet how many instances can be cited where persons, impervious to every appeal to be Christ's, have become enlisted by wise pastors in some activity.

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

and insensible of what was being done, become the most earnest, whole-souled Christians. It calls for tact, or better say the instinct which directs the minister who really has a passion for souls, but men can be saved who otherwise would never be, who are first given an opportunity to serve!

We linger with this scene at the wellside to note the optimism of Jesus in His preaching. In respect to His hearers, how remarkable it is. Perfectly aware of the narrowness of the disciples, the dullness of their intelligence, He is satisfied that it is not in vain to teach them in such a compendium of ethics as The Sermon on the Mount. The question always found so intricate, the relation of the cross to the Law, of grace and morals, is not given a word of illumination. He has a sublime confidence that these simple minds will make the adjustment at last. The same wonder comes over us here. The woman, as we should judge, the farthest away, is in His eyes the

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

nearest to the Kingdom of God. He speaks to her in the beautiful but profound imagery of the living water upspringing in the breast to everlasting life. His direct teaching the sagest of us cannot comprehend; the plummet sounds to touch no bottom. "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." How far is the Christian mind from grasping that truth to this day! The conceit of preachers who think they have to preach down to their hearers is refreshing. They are usually young! My son, you are in more danger of preaching over the heads of your people, of putting the fodder above the reach of the sheep, in the first three or four years after leaving the seminary, than you ever will be afterward. Honor the intelligence, the conscience, the good, in ordinary people. Do not think you have to play antics, get off sensational stunts, or by tricks of elocution, anecdote and slang "get down to their level." Wyclif, the Morning-

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

Star of the Reformation, the father of English literature, preached to the serfs; Luther, the Monk that shook the world, to German peasants; and Wesley and Whitefield to the colliers of Kingswood and the miners of Cornwall. Do you find Wyclif's writings, Luther's commentary on Galatians, or Wesley's sermons easy reading? But their hearers understood and were saved. What kind of people did Asbury preach to, and Lee and Snethen and Bascom, in the rude days of this country's settlement? Would God, you and I had their way of "getting down" to dying sinners! What kind of people listened with rapture, and died to sin and were made alive to God when Jonathan Edwards and Spurgeon and Bishop Simpson preached? Just such people as you and I have to preach to!

Jesus is optimistic of the situation. Surely the outlook for His kingdom was not bright as we should judge, that day on the Mount when the group of twelve was all His church on earth.

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

But there is not a tremor in the note, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall never pass away!" Think of it, just one fallen woman, her conscience touched, her wonder stirred, her feet running to tell her neighbors of the Saviour she had found; yet He says to His disciples, "Lo, the fields are white already to the harvest!" He was able to win his first convert because His heart thrilled in confidence of the world's redemption! The two Greeks come to the temple desiring to see Him. It is enough! He sees Satan falling like lightning from heaven. He looks through the blackness and crimson of His coming cross and sees all men drawn to Him by the magnet of His redeeming love! Let us preach in hope. To be sanguine is half the battle! If Jesus was we may be! We are armed in His great might. We have to do with a humanity predisposed to the Gospel by ages of heredity and education. The religious instincts of people may be starved and pervert-

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

ed, their religious natures may be degraded, their religious sensibilities may be dulled, but the religious nature is there. There is the sense of responsibility, of dependence, of futurity; there are fears and hopes and thoughts in these beating hearts. Only let them feel that you have confidence that they can be saved in Jesus; that the grace that availed for you avails for them! Never forget that their gayety and worldliness is half the time the frantic effort to get peace from the gnawing of the undying worm within them. Never forget that even vice and crime may bring men to the extremity and the self recognition that prepares them for Christ. The frail daughter of Gen. Booth had told her story of salvation, night after night, in Paris, only to be jeered at by the creatures who crowded the room. At last with a breaking heart, she came down from the platform and walked through the throng. On the rear seat was a girl, a poor street drab, and Miss Booth stopped as

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

her eyes fell on her, and she took the girl's face between her hands and kissed her, and said, "My dear, I would to God I could love you to Jesus." Pure lips had not touched hers for many a year. She started to her feet, staggered a moment, and then went down the hall and fell across the anxious seat. Today that girl is a commandant in the Salvation Army in France. Jesus saves to the uttermost. Preach in that conviction. One of his young preachers came to Mr. Spurgeon greatly depressed that so few were being saved. "Why," said the good man, "you do not expect souls to be saved every time you preach, do you?" "O, no sir, not every time," was the reply. "Then," said Mr. Spurgeon, "that is what's the matter. You will never see what you do not look for. According to your faith, it shall be done unto you."

Jesus was sanguine, though His work was thronged with discouragements. I think if I had an ampler salary, and

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

could be lifted above sordid and vexing cares, I could put a cheerier hopefulness into my ministry, and that I could anyhow if I did not see that my need is because Christian people are unkind, thoughtless, niggardly in this as they are in nothing else. I am in danger of losing all respect for those whom I must esteem very highly in love if I am to serve them well. Our relief is to reflect that we are paid in advance for all we can ever do,—we were redeemed and saved and counted worthy to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Since wealth has long ceased to be the distinctive badge of industry or talent or public service, and every man can have it who is selfish enough or dishonest enough, and at the same time cunning enough, one feels a certain noble dignity in a life to which none of its implications can attach, and to which it is of the smallest possible concern. And certainly it must ever seem that it is fit, is the only thing that is fit, that we who are to



## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

bid men, "deny themselves and take up the cross and follow Christ," and to "lay not up for themselves treasures on earth," should ourselves be poor men. It belongs to our fellowship of His sufferings. Jesus never had any salary. The birds had nests and the foxes dens but He had nowhere to lay His head. He often hungered. The principal man in His church let Him pay his taxes for him. The couch on which he died was the bitter cross; and if kind outsiders had not provided it, His body would not have had a grave. It does not behoove a Methodist preacher to be whining over a small salary like a little boy with a sore toe. He has forgotten the rock from which he was hewn and the hole of the pit from which he was digged. Am I poor? "Let no man trouble me. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus!"

Jesus was often tired! "Weary He sat thus by the well." Of course it is the labor it implies that makes that

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

fatigue so significant. The preacher wants to have a body, if there is any way to get it, not easily tired. Jesus was physically strong. He had walked this day some thirty-five miles before noon. Who of us could do that? Do not think to be enemic is to be saintly. Do not cultivate a clerical pallor. Thackeray tells us that Sherrick hired a curate to cough during the morning service at Lady Whittlesea's chapel. "The women like a consumptive parson, sir." Youth cannot be made to stay, but what makes it the valuable asset it is, its vivacity, its strength, its red blood, can be prolonged. If there is anything in the cold morning bath, in vigorous exercise, in sleep in pure air, in avoiding patent medicine, in the mastication of wholesome food, employ it to be robust. Then work in your calling that makes you tired will be a credit to you. Jesus never drove His over-tired faculties. This interview with the woman was the employment of His rest. Economize your strength, systematize your

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

work to make it as light as may be, do nothing that you do not have to do, nothing for popularity, nothing to make money, nothing that is not in the line of your work, and then work with such vigor that you will be tired enough to pillow your head on the ropes and hard nets in the boat's stern and not wake in the storm. Then when you stand in the pulpit you will count for a man among men!

Jesus encountered failure! He crossed the "dead line" when He was only thirty-three years old! He had great difficulty in getting any to believe on Him, and those whom He did get He could not hold. At the crisis "they all forsook Him and fled." We are told that if we are sincere and earnest we must succeed. Jesus was in earnest, but He "was despised and rejected of men." We are admonished that if we would only preach the pure, simple Gospel it would be popular and effective. As the cross loomed in clear distinctness in our Lord's preaching, "His

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

disciples walked no more with Him!" But He did not bate one jot of heart or hope! Toil, hunger, fatigue brought no discouragement; failure and defeat no cessation of effort. He was not misled. To Him popularity was not success; to be put to death was not to fail; He knew that not in attracting large audiences, or in multiplying adherents, or in being trumpeted by fame, but in fidelity to the work given Him to do, He would effect His purpose, get His victory and redeem the world!

His optimism we must have! We can be sanguine of the result, for, after all, it is not preaching, but "the Christ and Him crucified" whom we preach who is "the power of God unto salvation." On the battlefield of Gettysburg there is a spot known as "The Bloody Angle." It marked the crest of the battle and of the Civil War. There the floodtide reached its full and paused, and the ebb began. After that tremendous hour the war was still to rage

## JESUS, THE PREACHER.

for months and years; and thousands were to fall in the stubborn, fluctuating strife. But the crisis was past. The die was cast. The stroke of doom had sounded! The issue was determined! The backbone of the rebellion was broken. Thereafter, on the one side men fought in despair; on the other with the élan of assured victory! Calvary was the Bloody Angle! For two thousand years the strife has been prolonged, and it may go on as many more. We shall fall spent and wounded on the field! But we fight with sin in its death-throes. It got its mortal wound upon the Cross! We fight as men whose triumph is practically past! The Head of the column has crossed the stormed bastions! "The world is overcome by the blood of the Lamb!" We can be optimists!

